Multifactorial Determinants of Youth Engagement in Social Entrepreneurship: A Literature Review in the Moroccan Context

1. **M. Bourchich Ayoub**

2. **Mme Hajar Lafkir**

FSJES Souissi - Université Mohammed V de Rabat

ENCG, Université Chouaib Doukkali El Jadida

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Abstract

Against a context of persistent youth unemployment and precarious living conditions, social entrepreneurship is emerging as a promising pathway to economic and social inclusion. This paper offers a review of the national and international scientific literature on the multifactorial determinants of youth engagement in social entrepreneurship, with a particular focus on the Moroccan context. Using the work of Dees (1998), Mair and Martí (2006), Nicholls (2010), and others, the study identifies three main categories of factors: individual factors (motivation, human capital), institutional factors (support mechanisms, regulatory framework), and territorial factors (social capital, local resources, promotion mechanisms). The review also highlights gaps in the existing literature, notably the absence of integrative models that allow for a systemic analysis of these interactions. A future research question is proposed to guide upcoming empirical studies.

Mots-clés : *entrepreneuriat social, jeunes, inclusion économique, Maroc, économie sociale et solidaire, déterminants multifactoriels*

Keywords: *social entrepreneurship, youth, economic inclusion, Morocco, social and solidarity economy, multifactorial determinants*

1. Introduction

In various developing countries, and particularly in Morocco, youth unemployment and precariousness represent a major socio-economic challenge. Classical models of professional integration are showing their limits, prompting the search for more inclusive and sustainable alternatives. Public employment policies, though ambitious, struggle to absorb a growing influx of both graduates and unskilled young people into a structurally deficient labor market.

In this context, social entrepreneurship emerges as a promising substitute for creating economic opportunities while addressing unmet social needs. By combining entrepreneurial logic with a social purpose, it offers an original framework for the economic inclusion of youth, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas.

A central question therefore arises: **what are the main factors influencing youth engagement in social entrepreneurship, particularly in the Moroccan context** ? This paper aims to analyze the contributions of the scientific literature on this topic and to identify the multifactorial determinants impacting this phenomenon, with the goal of better understanding the mechanisms that foster the economic inclusion of young people.

2. Conceptual Framework: Definition and Theoretical Approaches to Social Entrepreneurship

2.1. Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship is generally defined as an entrepreneurial activity that combines an economic purpose with an explicit social objective. Unlike classical entrepreneurship, which is primarily centered on capitalistic ends, social entrepreneurship aims at creating lasting social value while ensuring the economic viability of such a project.

According to Dees (1998), the social entrepreneur acts as an agent of change, identifying opportunities to address socially-driven problems and implementing innovative and sustainable solutions. From this perspective, the primary objective is not profit maximization, but the creation of measurable and replicable social impact. This conception places the ethical and transformative dimension at the very heart of social entrepreneurial activity.

2.2. Theorical approaches

Several scholarly works have contributed to conceptualizing social entrepreneurship as a hybrid field situated at the intersection of the market, the state, and civil society. Among these, Mair and Martí (2006) define social entrepreneurship as a process aimed at creating social value through innovative practices and combinations of often limited resources. This definition emphasizes the processual dimension and the capacity for innovation inherent to this type of initiative.

Nicholls (2010) points out that this disciplinary field is still in a phase of theoretical construction, characterized by a diversity of organizational forms and economic models, ranging from cooperatives to hybrid social enterprises. This structural heterogeneity makes any attempt at a unified definition difficult, yet equally constitutes a richness of the field.

Other theoretical currents have further enriched the analysis of social entrepreneurship. Social capital theory (Putnam, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986) highlights the role of networks and trust-based relationships in resource mobilization and the sustainability of initiatives. Institutional theory (North, 1990) underscores the importance of the regulatory framework and support mechanisms in creating an environment conducive to the emergence of social entrepreneurship. Finally, the capabilities approach (Sen, 1999) invites us to consider social entrepreneurship as a vehicle for both individual and collective empowerment.

3. Social Entrepreneurship in the Moroccan Context

3.1. The SSE as a driver of inclusion

In the Moroccan context, social entrepreneurship develops primarily within the social and solidarity economy (SSE), through rural cooperatives, productive associations, and urban social enterprises. Several studies highlight that these structures constitute a lever for the economic empowerment of youth and women, while at the same time enhancing local resources and territorial know-how (Bouchard, 2012; El Mazoudi, 2025; Benjelloun et al., 2023).

Studies on Moroccan cooperatives also demonstrate their contribution to local job creation, social cohesion, and territorial development, particularly in rural areas (HCP, 2022). These findings confirm the potential of the SSE as an instrument of economic inclusion, especially for populations far removed from the formal labor market.

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3.2. Institutional Support Mechanisms

Several empirical studies and institutional reports show that social economy initiatives contribute to job creation and the reduction of territorial inequalities. According to the Haut-Commissariat au Plan (2022), cooperatives and SSE structures play an important role in stimulating local economies, particularly in the agricultural, artisanal, and agri-food sectors.

Other research highlights the role of support mechanisms, such as the programs of the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) and youth economic inclusion platforms, in strengthening entrepreneurial skills and market access. These mechanisms act simultaneously on the development of individual capacities and on the creation of an institutional environment conducive to the emergence of viable social projects.

However, the literature remains largely untapped and fragmented, lacking integrative models capable of comprehensively analyzing the determinants of youth inclusion through social entrepreneurship in the Moroccan context.

4. Empirical Results: Social Entrepreneurship, Inclusion, and Local Development

4.1. Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Inclusion

Several studies at the international level demonstrate that social entrepreneurship constitutes a lever for economic and social inclusion, particularly for marginalized groups such as youth, women, and rural populations. By creating economic activities with social ends, these initiatives foster access to employment, skills development, and the empowerment of beneficiaries.

The work of Mair and Martí (2006) shows that social entrepreneurship makes it possible to mobilize local resources in order to address unmet social needs. Likewise, Bornstein (2004) underscores the role of social entrepreneurs as agents of transformation, capable of creating innovative and sustainable solutions to improve the living conditions of vulnerable populations.

4.2. Impact on innovation and Territorial Developement

Other empirical studies highlight the impact of social entrepreneurship on innovation and territorial development. According to Defourny and Nyssens (2010), social enterprises contribute to the creation of sustainable jobs and social cohesion, particularly in transition economies.

The research of Santos (2012) likewise indicates that social entrepreneurship fosters social innovation by developing new organizational and economic models adapted to local needs. In several contexts, these initiatives have contributed to territorial revitalization, poverty reduction, and improved access to basic services. These findings converge around the idea that social entrepreneurship constitutes an effective instrument for stimulating employment, innovation, and local development, while reinforcing socio-economic inclusion.

Mulgan (2006) specifies that social innovation distinguishes itself from conventional technological or organizational innovations by its orientation toward the resolution of collective problems and the improvement of the common good. This conceptual framework allows us to understand social entrepreneurship not merely as an economic tool, but as a vector of profound social transformation.

5. Gaps in the Literature

Despite the growing interest in social entrepreneurship, the literature, particularly in the Moroccan context, presents several important limitations. First, in-depth empirical studies remain scarce, and most works focus on case descriptions or sectoral analyses without systematically assessing the actual impact of social entrepreneurship on the economic inclusion of youth.

Furthermore, existing research often addresses the various explanatory dimensions in a fragmented manner. Social entrepreneurship, social innovation, institutional support mechanisms, social capital, and territorial valorization mechanisms are generally studied separately, which prevents a full grasp of the complex interactions between these factors. This analytical compartmentalization constitutes a major obstacle to a systemic understanding of youth inclusion processes.

Moreover, the role of valorization mechanisms, such as national labels or recognition schemes for local initiatives, remains largely underexplored in the scientific literature, particularly with regard to their effect on the credibility and sustainability of youth-led projects. This gap is all the more noteworthy given that these mechanisms play a central role in the legitimization of social initiatives and in their access to financial and institutional resources.

6. Discussion and Future Research Question

The literature review highlights that youth engagement in social entrepreneurship does not depend on a single factor, but rather results from a combination of individual, institutional, and territorial elements. International works confirm the role of social innovation, social capital, and the institutional environment in the success of initiatives, while Moroccan studies underscore the importance of cooperatives, support mechanisms, and local valorization schemes.

However, the absence of integrative models and in-depth empirical analyses still limits the understanding of the explanatory mechanisms that genuinely foster the economic inclusion of youth. A systemic approach, crossing individual, institutional, and territorial dimensions, proves necessary to account for the complexity of this phenomenon.

The following research question therefore emerges to guide future empirical work:

How do institutional support mechanisms, social capital, and territorial valorization schemes interact to sustainably influence youth engagement in social entrepreneurship in Morocco?

This question invites us to move beyond sectoral analyses and adopt an integrated approach, capable of capturing the multi-level dynamics at play in the process of economic inclusion of youth through social entrepreneurship.

7. Conclusion

This literature review has brought to light the richness and complexity of the disciplinary field of social entrepreneurship, as well as its potential as a lever for the economic inclusion of youth in the Moroccan context. By cross-referencing the contributions of social capital theories, institutional approaches, and empirical studies, it appears that youth engagement in social entrepreneurship results from a multifactorial structure that must be analyzed in an integrated manner.

The gaps identified in the literature open up new research perspectives, particularly with regard to the analysis of interactions between institutional support mechanisms, social capital, and territorial valorization schemes. Longitudinal empirical studies, drawing on mixed methodologies, would allow for a better understanding of the conditions under which youth-led social entrepreneurship initiatives emerge and become sustainable in Morocco.

These future works may contribute to the development of public policies and support mechanisms better suited to the realities of young Moroccan social entrepreneurs, taking into account the diversity of territories and institutional contexts.

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